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Expression of Interest Letter - VIA ECFS

March 7, 2014

Chairman Thomas Wheeler
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Ajit Pai
Commissioner Michael O'Rielly
Jonathan Chambers
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Re: Expression of Interest – Rural Broadband Trials Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90

Dear Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners, and Mr. Chambers,

This letter is to express the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland's interest in participating in the Rural Broadband Trials announced at the January 30th FCC Open Meeting. While we do not have a project to propose, we take this opportunity to document the need of the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland for high-speed Internet service. We respectfully ask the Federal Communications Commission to consider our area's need when making decisions regarding the Rural Broadband Trials and any future initiatives related to the Connect America Fund.

Background

Our region has traditionally relied upon agriculture, forestry, and seafood harvesting. There is a need to diversify the economy in order to provide greater stability. One of the ways to achieve this is to bring in different industries, especially those that are technology-oriented. Not having broadband capability has been a real handicap in attracting such industries.

Geographic Territory

This region has a population of approximately 200,000 and covers about 1000 square miles with little topography. It is heavily forested which provides a barrier to current wireless technology. However, the population density does not support fiber or cable connection to homes and businesses.

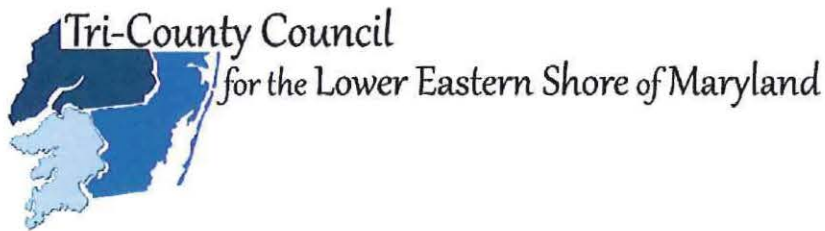
Proposed Technology

At this point we are not proposing any specific technology. The minimum speed we would be interested in is the lower end of 10MBPS down and basic TV channels. A monthly charge of \$20 would be a good



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Tri-County Council

for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland

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target for this service. Higher speeds (20MBPS down and above) will definitely be needed, however, a cost model needs to be built incorporating resource and operational costs required to support this increased service. A \$50 charge for faster internet (20MBPS or more) is a good rough target. However, new approaches leveraging digital technologies in education, healthcare and other organizations will in all likelihood require 2-3 times this bandwidth within the next 3-5 years.

Existing Providers

Currently the region has multiple providers including AT&T/Verizon 4LTE Mobile Wireless, Comcast, Verizon DSL, Mediacom, Charter Communications and HughesNet. All of these providers have been unwilling to extend higher speed services to the more rural areas as their financial models do not justify the return on investment.

List of Anchor Institutions

At this point a significant proportion of our CAI's have been connected through projects such as BTOP. Near term, we will be assessing which of the remainder (including any "new builds/newly designated") need to be connected. We can provide this information when we have a better idea of their roles in the rural Broadband Trials you are planning.

Thank you for considering our Expression of Interest in your decisions about the amount of funding that will be allocated in the Rural Broadband Trials. We commend you in this effort to connect rural communities and are ready to help you close the digital divide.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Pennington
Executive Director



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